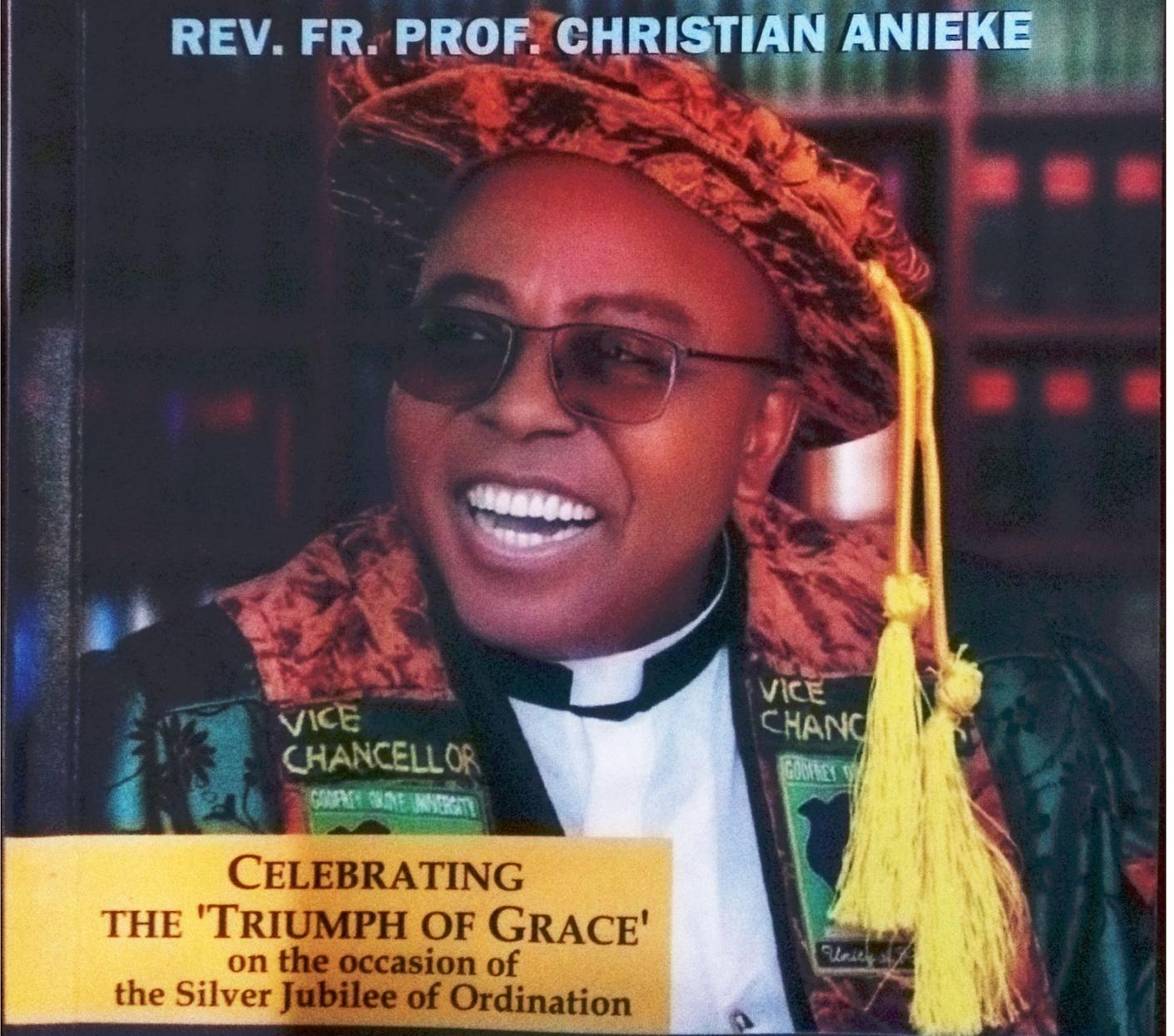# Unity
of
KNOWLEDGE
INTELLECTUAL LEGACY OF REV. FR. PROF. CHRISTIAN ANIEKE

VICE CHANCELLOR

CELEBRATING THE 'TRIUMPH OF GRACE'
on the occasion of
the Silver Jubilee of Ordination

Editors: **Emeritus** Prof. Romanus Egudu
(Editor-in-Chief)

Ven. Prof. John Obasikene

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LIBRARIAN-AI COLLABORATION SHAPING THE FUTURE OF HOLISTIC EDUCATION

Iwu James, Juliana

Introduction

In an era of rapid technological change, educational institutions face growing pressure to prioritize measurable outcomes, technical skills, and economic value. However, a growing body of scholars and practitioners advocate for an alternative paradigm: holistic education, which aims to nurture the whole person rather than narrowly focusing on cognitive performance or job readiness. Holistic education seeks to address the full range of human development, including emotional, ethical, and spiritual dimensions, and to foster meaningful engagement with both the self and the world. Holistic education envisions learning as a process of nurturing the entire human being in their full complexity and potential. The term refers to a pedagogical philosophy that integrates multiple dimensions of human experience, mind, body, emotion, spirit, and community, in the service of meaningful, transformative learning. By emphasizing interconnectedness and personal relevance, holistic education challenges reductionist approaches and fosters a more inclusive vision of what it means to learn and grow. Holistic education seeks not only to impart knowledge but to foster connection, purpose, and lifelong inquiry. Holistic education is rooted in the belief that learning should be life-affirming, relational, and deeply connected to the learner's identity and purpose (Huitt, 2011; Mahmoudi, Jafari, Nasrabadi, & Liaghatdar, 2012; Miseliunaite, Kliziene, & Cibulskas, 2022).

Holistic education is not a fixed methodology but a flexible framework that emphasizes integration across domains of knowledge, values, and human development. The term encompasses several key dimensions:

- Cognitive development, includes critical thinking, inquiry, and creativity.

- Emotional and social growth, promoting empathy, self-awareness, and interpersonal competence.

- Physical health, recognizing the importance of movement, wellness, and embodiment in learning.

- Spiritual awareness, understood not necessarily in religious terms but as a sense of connection, meaning, and purpose (Palmer, 1998).

This multifaceted view acknowledges that learners are not passive recipients of content but dynamic beings whose personal, social, and moral development are essential to education (Miller, 2007).

The vision of Godfrey Okoye University (GOUNI), as drafted by Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke, advocates for an educational approach that transcends narrow, utilitarian perspectives, embracing holistic development that integrates the intellectual, moral, relational, and spiritual aspects of students. At the heart of his philosophy is the belief that education is a dialogical process. In this dynamic exchange, knowledge is not merely transmitted but co-created through encounters, reflection, and meaningful engagement. This model perceives learners not as passive recipients but as active participants in the collective pursuit of knowledge. In this way, it embodies a holistic educational ideal, viewing humans as whole beings, body, mind, and spirit, aiming to nurture all facets of human potential. Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke's popular maxim, "You cannot be anonymous at GOUNI," is far more than a slogan; it is a profound expression of holistic educational philosophy. In holistic education, the

learner is not treated as a number, a grade, or a data point but as a whole person, a being with intellectual potential, emotional depth, moral capacity, and spiritual dignity (Miller, 2000). Anonymity is antithetical to such an approach because holistic education insists that each student must be seen, heard, and supported in their individual growth. At **GOUNI**, this principle is realized through personalized mentorship, dialogical learning, inclusive pedagogy, and integrated student services, including the university's library system.

Philosophical and Theoretical Foundations

Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke's philosophy of education and leadership at Godfrey Okoye University reflects a unique blend of core ideas from influential educational thinkers, applied in practical institutional practices. Paulo Freire's philosophy aligns closely with Fr. Anieke's dialogical approach. Freire viewed education as a practice of freedom, where teachers and students engage in mutual reflection to transform their reality. Fr. Anieke's focus on education as dialogue is evident in the GOUNI classroom, where co-learning, student voice, and ethical reasoning are central. The university's slogan, "Where is the evidence?" echoes Freire's concept of critical consciousness, urging learners to question assumptions, validate knowledge, and act responsibly within their communities. Similarly, John Dewey, a leading figure in progressive education, believed that learning should be experiential, democratic, and problem-based. Fr. Anieke's emphasis on students participating in entrepreneurial ventures exemplifies Dewey's view of education as life itself, not just preparation for life. Dewey's support for interdisciplinary learning is evident in GOUNI's rejection of fragmented curricula and its promotion of the unity of knowledge, integrating faith, science, and culture.

Furthermore, Dewey argued that education should be deeply connected to life, community, and democratic participation. He

envisioned schools as microcosms of society, where learners are prepared to contribute meaningfully to public life. This aligns with Fr. Anieke's philosophy and vision, as GOUNI evaluates students not only on intellectual achievement but also on character. Fr. Anieke's philosophy affirms that education must serve both personal growth and social purpose, fostering reflective individuals who can contribute to the common good. Fr. Anieke is not only a visionary institution builder but also a philosophical voice of contemporary relevance, challenging educators to reclaim the sacred, social, and transformative goals of learning. His vision presents a compelling blueprint for how universities can become sites of wholeness, where dialogue, inclusion, and ethical formation are central to academics (Dewey, 1986; Freire, 1970; Maslow, 1971; Mielkov, Bakhov, Bilyakovska, Kostenko, & Nych, 2021; Miller, et al., 2019; Noddings, 2005; Miller, 1990; O'Sullivan, 1999).

Key Principles and Pedagogical Practices

Holistic education is a philosophy of learning that informs various instructional strategies. Among its core principles are:

1. Learner-Centeredness

Holistic education respects the individuality of learners and emphasizes personalized learning pathways. This often involves flexible curricula, self-directed learning, and attention to multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1999).

2. Experiential Learning

Learning by doing is central to holistic education. Activities such as project-based learning, nature immersion, and service learning foster deeper engagement and personal relevance (Kolb, 1984).

3. Emotional and Spiritual Development

Holistic educators acknowledge that emotions and values play a vital role in learning. Classrooms may integrate practices like mindfulness,

ethical reflection, and dialogue to support emotional intelligence and inner awareness (Eisler, 2000).

4. Interdisciplinary Integration

Rather than isolating subjects into silos, holistic education encourages the integration of knowledge across disciplines, helping students see patterns and relationships among concepts (Drake & Burns, 2004).

Experiential Learning at GOUNI

At GOUNI, experiential learning is not optional; it is central to the educational policy and institutional culture. A clear example is the university's entrepreneurship policy, which requires students to gain practical entrepreneurial skills during their long breaks. This is supported by the Directorate of Entrepreneurship, which not only organizes skill-building placements but also offers stipends to assist students during their training. Additionally, the university features a Startup Lab that acts as an innovation hub, where students can prototype and develop business ideas with guidance from staff and external experts. These efforts ensure that students move beyond theoretical knowledge by directly experiencing the risks, creativity, and operational challenges involved in launching and maintaining real-world enterprises aligned with their interests. In the Faculty of Law, this principle of experiential learning is also strongly enforced: students must complete internships at law firms before graduation, gaining firsthand legal practice experience and bridging the gap between academic learning and professional ethics. These practices align with the university's guiding motto, "Where is the evidence?" which promotes learning rooted in inquiry, validation, and tangible results. The question encourages students not just to learn, but to apply, demonstrate, and reflect on their knowledge, fostering a culture of accountability and engaged scholarship. GOUNI implements experiential learning as a vital strategy for comprehensive student

development, preparing learners not only to excel academically but also to thrive as ethical professionals, inventive thinkers, and active community members.

The Place of the Library in Holistic Education

Libraries are vital in holistic education, providing resources, safe spaces, and opportunities for self-directed and collaborative learning. They foster intellectual, emotional, social, and physical development, valuing connection and self-discovery. Libraries, especially academic libraries, offer inclusive, flexible, and empowering spaces for interdisciplinary exploration, reflective inquiry, and community engagement. They function as essential ecosystems in holistic learning, shaping conditions for lifelong growth. The role of libraries in holistic education is multifaceted and foundational. As centers of knowledge, creativity, community, and care, libraries align with and amplify the goals of holistic education. They offer safe, inclusive, and stimulating environments where learners can grow not just intellectually but as whole human beings. As education systems continue to evolve, recognizing and investing in the library's holistic potential will be essential for fostering well-rounded, ethically grounded, and socially responsible citizens (Koontz & Gubbin, 2010; Riedling et al., 2019; Zhang, 2010).

Libraries as Interdisciplinary Learning Hubs

Holistic education requires interdisciplinary connections to address real-world challenges. Libraries are uniquely positioned to support this by curating collections and services that transcend departmental boundaries. They encourage creativity and intellectual integration by drawing connections across fields. Academic libraries can bring together materials from environmental science, ethics, and political theory under a single theme, such as climate justice. Libraries also serve as intellectual hubs, providing access to a wide range of information resources, such as multidisciplinary. Research shows that students who engage with library materials improve academic

performance (American Library Association, ALA, 2021; Lance & Kachel, 2018; Sulyman, Adeyefa, & Amzat, 2021).

Libraries as Collaborative Learning Spaces

Modern libraries are creating vibrant, collaborative learning environments that are purposefully designed to promote meaningful learning, academic success, and personal development. They reduce distractions and create a calm, regulated environment ideal for focused study. These libraries have separate sections for silent study and group collaboration, individual study rooms for intensive work, group study rooms with whiteboards and media tools for online collaboration, technology-equipped spaces for digital learning, and open reading areas for flexible use. Studies have revealed that environmental factors have an impact on study efficacy. Libraries improve academic productivity through environmental design. According to an environmental psychology intentionally designed libraries foster cognitive engagement and mitigate mental fatigue (Bilandzic & Johnson, 2019; Fisher *et al.*, 2014 ;.Lankes, 2016; Slatter & Howard, 2013;Scott-Webber, Strickland, & Kapitula, 2013; Turner, Welch, & Reynolds, 2013).

The libraries at GOUNI are thoughtfully designed to support a variety of learning styles and developmental needs through their diverse physical and functional layouts. Across its different campuses and faculties, GOUNI libraries provide dedicated collaborative spaces where students can engage in group projects, peer tutoring, and academic discussions, fostering a spirit of cooperative inquiry and intellectual exchange. In recognition of the importance of solitude and inner formation, GOUNI libraries also offer quiet zones for personal study, reflective reading, and contemplative thought. These distinct learning environments address not only academic needs but also the spiritual and emotional dimensions of education, encouraging students to cultivate focus, mindfulness, and ethical reflection, core

values within GOUNI's holistic and human-centered educational philosophy.

Libraries and the Development of Critical and Ethical Thinking

The library is an essential venue for fostering critical and ethical thought. In a time characterized by misinformation and algorithm-driven content, libraries provide education in information literacy, assisting individuals in critically assessing sources, understanding the ethical utilization of knowledge, and navigating through complex digital environments. Librarians play a crucial role in holistic learning by actively educating and mentoring students, focusing on information literacy and ethical technology use. They teach responsibility, empathy, and discernment, which are essential for the ethical dimensions of holistic education. Through reference services, research consultations, and information literacy instruction, librarians equip learners with the skills needed to locate, evaluate, and ethically use information. These skills are foundational to intellectual autonomy and moral reasoning, both of which are essential in holistic education. This guidance fosters the moral and ethical development of students, promoting the principles of truth, fairness, and responsible citizenship (Association of College and Research Libraries [ACRL], 2015; Head et al., 2013).

GOUNI Libraries are not merely repositories of information; they provide access to a wide array of interdisciplinary resources, including philosophy, ethics, logic, law, religious studies, literature, and science that allow students to encounter multiple viewpoints and evaluate knowledge across contexts. These materials support the development of analytical thinking, encouraging students to challenge biases, synthesize information, and construct well-reasoned arguments.

Libraries as Partners in Curriculum Design

Libraries are not just passive supporters of holistic education; they are active partners in transforming educational practice. Librarians collaborate with faculty, teachers, and administrators to design curricula that integrate inquiry-based learning, promote interdisciplinarity, and support student-centered pedagogies. In doing so, libraries help reframe education around the interconnected development of mind, body, and spirit, aligning institutional values with holistic aims (Doud, 2025; Todd, 2008). As the curriculum increasingly shifts toward hybrid and digital formats, GOUNI Libraries serve as content curators and digital literacy advisors. They assist departments in selecting high-quality e-resources, open educational resources (OERs), and scholarly databases that can be embedded directly into learning management systems. By doing so, they help align teaching content with global academic standards. The GOUNI Librarian participates in curriculum planning sessions and academic workshops, making the library integral to institutional curriculum governance. The librarian's presence in these forums ensures that curriculum decisions are informed by resource availability and learner needs. The University Librarian also offers periodic faculty training sessions on new resources, research tools, and instructional supports, helping lecturers continuously refine their course design and delivery.

Research Support

Librarians support holistic education by guiding students and researchers in developing critical research skills that span across disciplines and methodologies. They help students navigate complex information ecosystems, encouraging them to ask deep questions, explore multiple perspectives, and synthesize ideas across domains, which are core practices of holistic learning. Moreover, librarians often curate research guides and design inquiry-based learning experiences

that promote reflective thinking and problem-solving, enabling learners to engage with meaningful and socially relevant topics. In interdisciplinary and integrative research, which is central to holistic education, librarian expertise is especially valuable. They assist learners in crossing disciplinary boundaries and locating relevant sources that may otherwise remain siloed in fragmented databases or institutional repositories. By facilitating this access, librarians help students build a unified understanding of knowledge that reflects the interconnected nature of real-world problems. Furthermore, librarians reinforce the ethical dimensions of research by teaching about citation practices, intellectual property, and bias in information systems. Librarians guide students toward responsible scholarship that respects diverse voices and fosters academic integrity (Das, & Banerjee, 2021; Oghenekaro, 2019).

Librarians assist in Interdisciplinary Navigation

Integrative research often requires navigating unfamiliar epistemologies, vocabularies, and research methods. Librarians are well-positioned to guide scholars and students across disciplinary boundaries, offering curated resources, literature mapping, and metadata expertise that reveal conceptual linkages. For example, a student researching climate change may need to engage with data from environmental science, ethical frameworks from philosophy, and perspectives from Indigenous knowledge systems. Librarians can facilitate access to such diverse sources and help learners critically assess and integrate them into a unified inquiry. This process nurtures intellectual curiosity, open-mindedness, and epistemological humility, all core to holistic learning (Iwu-James, Haliso, Soyemi, & Madukoma, 2021; Wang, Noorhidawati, Yanti Idaya, & Yuan, 2025)

Promotion of Digital Literacy

Digital literacy involves the ability to access, evaluate, and use digital tools and content effectively. Libraries help students navigate digital

platforms, understand information architecture, and use search strategies that go beyond keyword entry. Librarians play a central role in fostering digital literacy by serving as educators, mentors, and facilitators within both physical and digital learning environments. They extend the narrow, instrumental understanding of digital literacy into a broader, humanistic framework, teaching students not only how to use search engines or databases but also how to question the sources, reflect on biases, and recognize the implications of their digital footprint.

Librarians play a pedagogical role by integrating digital literacy instruction into research consultations, workshops, course-embedded sessions, and online tutorials. These learning opportunities go beyond skill acquisition to foster critical inquiry, ethical discernment, and reflective learning, all of which are essential for holistic development (Obinyan & Ugwuanyi 2022; Palmer 2023; Wang,& Si, 2024).

Librarians contribute to students' emotional resilience and ethical awareness by facilitating discussions on digital well-being, online identity, and respectful communication. By fostering a safe and non-judgmental learning environment, librarians encourage students to reflect on how their digital practices align with their personal and social values. Librarians work in collaboration with faculty, instructional designers, technologists, and student support services to build cohesive digital learning ecosystems. This interdisciplinary teamwork ensures that digital literacy is woven throughout the student experience, embedded in curriculum, co-curricular activities, and lifelong learning frameworks. Librarians are emerging as pivotal leaders in cultivating digital literacy as a multidimensional, ethical, and humanistic practice. (Feerrar, 2022; Ifijeh, Iwu-James, & Adebayo, 2016 ; Nwagwu, 2024).

At GOUNI, librarians have embraced the responsibility of equipping students and staff with the competencies necessary to critically engage

with digital technologies, navigate information ecosystems, and use digital tools responsibly. This function positions the library as a central actor in realizing the university's holistic educational vision. GOUNI Libraries organize regular training sessions on digital skills development for students and faculty. These include:

- Information search strategies using academic databases and search engines

- Referencing and citation tools (e.g., Mendeley, Zotero, APA Style Manager)

- Avoiding plagiarism and understanding academic integrity policies

- Navigating open educational resources (OERs) and digital repositories

- Safe and effective use of generative AI tools and digital writing assistants

These programs are designed not only to improve academic performance but also to foster confidence, independence, and ethical awareness in digital engagement.

Integrating Digital Literacy into the Curriculum

GOUNI librarians partner with academic departments to embed digital literacy skills into course curricula, particularly in first-year general studies (GST) and final-year research projects. For instance:

- In GST courses, students receive formal instruction on how to conduct academic research online, evaluate web-based sources, and organize digital citations.

- In capstone projects and dissertations, librarians collaborate with supervisors to ensure students are using reliable

databases, scholarly journals, and open-access tools for literature reviews and evidence gathering.

This integration of digital literacy into the curriculum ensures that students are not only content consumers but also responsible digital citizens and creators of knowledge. One of the pillars of holistic education is equitable access to learning resources, regardless of socio-economic background. GOUNI Libraries help bridge the digital divide by:

- Providing on-campus access to computers, internet, and e-resources

- Offering offline content options for students in bandwidth-constrained environments

- Training students in cost-effective digital tools and platforms (e.g., open-source research software)

- Ensuring students with disabilities have access to assistive technologies and inclusive digital formats

These efforts support the university's mission of ensuring that no student is left behind in the digital transformation of learning.

Librarians as Builders of Diverse and Inclusive Collections

Libraries play a vital pedagogical role by curating and promoting resources that represent the diversity of human experience. Diversity and inclusion extend beyond demographics, involving equitable representation of ideas, histories, cultures, identities, and worldviews across various media and genres. Librarians play a vital role in ensuring students can encounter and explore materials that reflect both their own identities and those different from theirs, facilitating social-emotional growth and moral reasoning. Librarians serve as curators of pluralism, actively seeking to build collections that address gaps in

representation and provide alternative epistemologies. They engage in critical collection analysis, advocating for acquisition policies that prioritize equity. Diverse collections support critical and reflective inquiry, fostering intellectual humility and cognitive dissonance, which are crucial for democratic citizenship and ethical decision-making. Librarians must navigate intellectual freedom, censorship, and institutional politics while upholding inclusive values (Caswell, Punzalan, & Sangwand, 2017; Kramer, 2024; Smith, 2020; Schlesselman-Tarango, 2017).

Libraries as Places for Spiritual Development

Libraries play a crucial role in holistic learning by providing spaces for values, reflection, and purpose. They curate values-based literature, foster reflective practices, and offer environments that nurture meaning-making and ethical deliberation. Library collections, especially, philosophical works, religious and spiritual texts, and world religions, encourage critical reflection and ethical reasoning, fostering intellectual humility, moral imagination, and the ability to engage respectfully with differing viewpoints. Libraries also promote interfaith literacy and pluralistic dialogue by building collections that include both secular and sacred traditions. Reflective reading and contemplative spaces are essential for spiritual and ethical growth. Libraries offer quiet, contemplative spaces where individuals can engage in reflective reading and introspection, engaging in self-awareness and emotional insight. They also curate reading lists centered on meaning, values, and emotional resilience, often in collaboration with wellness centers, chaplaincies, or faculty in the humanities (Moradi, Kazerani, Shekofteh, & Jambarsang, 2018 ;. Zajonc, 2013). GOUNI library maintains a curated collection of spiritual, philosophical, and religious texts, including Catholic theology, African spiritual traditions, Islamic ethics, interfaith dialogue resources, and global moral philosophy. These texts provide students with access to spiritual resources from diverse faiths and

religious traditions, fostering interfaith tolerance as an essential component of holistic education. The presence of these reinforces GOUNI's identity as a Catholic university that values intellectual openness and spiritual depth.

Enhancing Holistic Education: Artificial Intelligence (Ai) and Librarian Synergy

AI refers to systems that display intelligent behaviour by analyzing their environment and taking action, with some degree of autonomy, to achieve specific goals. AI technologies in library such as intelligent search engines, personalized recommender systems, semantic analysis tools, and generative AI, can enhance holistic education by supporting learners' intellectual autonomy, curiosity, and reflective inquiry. AI tools help students identify patterns, synthesize knowledge across disciplines, and generate new insights, which aligns with holistic education's aim to unify fragmented knowledge and promote integrative thinking. For instance, AI-driven discovery systems can connect themes across history, philosophy, science, and the arts, facilitating interdisciplinary research that addresses complex real-world questions (Chan, 2024 ; Cox, Pinfield, & Rutter, 2020

AI can be leveraged to enhance holistic learning if used intentionally. The future of holistic education depends increasingly on adaptive, integrative learning ecosystems. In this context, libraries emerge not only as physical and digital learning hubs but also as evolving platforms for collaboration. Central to this transformation is the synergistic relationship between librarians and AI, which holds the potential to enhance personalized learning, democratize access to diverse knowledge systems, and support the whole learner in unprecedented ways. AI technologies and the professional expertise of librarians can forge new paths for education that is learner-centered, inclusive, and ethically grounded. AI is reshaping the way information is accessed, personalized, and understood using tools such as natural

language processing, recommendation algorithms, and predictive search to enhance user engagement and resource discovery. However, these tools alone cannot ensure the values of critical inquiry, inclusivity, or ethical literacy central to holistic education. Librarians are responsible for interpreting, contextualizing, and guiding the use of AI tools in ways that align with the developmental needs of learners. Their judgment ensures that AI systems are not only efficient but equitable and humane. In this blended model, AI handles information complexity, while librarians preserve interpretive depth and ethical accountability. In this synergistic model:

- Librarians interpret and contextualize AI-generated recommendations, helping learners move beyond surface-level information toward critical, reflective understanding.

- AI tools assist librarians by analyzing learning preferences, suggesting resources across modalities, and offering multilingual, multimodal support.

- Together, they personalize the library experience in alignment with holistic developmental goals, ensuring that intellectual, ethical, and emotional growth remain central to the learning process.

(Cox *et al.*, 2019; Holstein, McLaren, & Aleven 2019; Iwu-James, & Yacob, 2023; Kuhlthau, Maniotes, & Caspari, 2007; .Luckin *et al.*, 2016; Smith *et al.*, 2021).

Supporting Intellectual Growth with Librarian–AI Collaboration

AI-powered systems enhance inquiry-based and self-directed learning by offering adaptive pathways through vast digital resources. For instance, AI can recommend readings based on user interests or suggest new areas of inquiry based on emerging research This scaffolds the learner's intellectual journey while enabling

personalization at scale. The librarian remains essential in guiding learners to think critically about the recommendations they receive. Where AI offers breadth, the librarian provides depth, questioning assumptions, highlighting diverse perspectives, and facilitating dialogues that move beyond algorithmic suggestions (Holmes et al., 2019; Luckin *et al.*, 2016)

Research Support using AI: The blending of AI with human intelligence creates an efficient and ethical research support system. Despite the challenge of information overload, AI can screen vast volumes of literature, categorize studies, and extract data for reviews more efficiently than was previously possible. AI streamlines the labor-intensive processes associated with systematic reviews, including citation screening and data extraction. For example, natural language processing tools can prompt students to consider diverse viewpoints, recognize bias, and engage with values-laden texts. In combination with librarians' guidance, AI becomes a partner in fostering digital literacy, ethical reasoning, and critical consciousness, all integral to holistic education. However, these benefits are only realized when AI is used responsibly and ethically, with oversight by librarians who can mitigate bias, ensure transparency, and contextualize results within a human-centered educational framework. Librarians use AI technologies such as Dimensions, Lens.org, and Connected Papers to provide sophisticated citation mapping, visualizations, and impact measures. The human intelligence of the librarian remains central in ensuring that methods, rigorous evidence and synthesis are maintained. AI complements human intelligence through scalable and responsive services of virtual research assistants. The human-centered values that librarians bring guarantee that research support is accessible, inclusive, and aligned with the principles of academic integrity ((Broussard, 2018; Head, 2021; Floridi et al., 2018; Cox et al., 2019; Koltay, 2020; Tenopir *et al.*, 2019)

Designing Inclusive, Adaptive Library Systems Using AI

AI systems are only as inclusive as the data on which they are trained. When biased data leads to biased recommendations or the marginalization of minority voices, the human role becomes even more critical. Librarians act as guardians of equity and inclusion, curating diverse materials, auditing AI outputs, and involving communities in the design of AI-enhanced services. For example, librarians can adjust AI-powered recommendation engines to highlight underrepresented authors, multilingual resources, or culturally significant materials. Such interventions ensure that students encounter a broad spectrum of ideas, perspectives, and voices essential to holistic education's commitment to empathy, justice, and global citizenship (Bourg, 2014 ; Vinopal, 2016; Noble, 2018).

In the evolving landscape of higher education, the partnership between librarians and artificial intelligence (AI) is opening new frontiers for inclusive and holistic learning, particularly for students with physical challenges. AI-powered tools such as text-to-speech software, screen readers, voice-controlled search interfaces, and automated captioning are transforming how physically challenged students engage with library resources. These technologies significantly reduce barriers to information access, allowing students with visual, motor, or speech impairments to navigate digital and physical collections independently. However, it is the human presence of the librarian that ensures these tools are thoughtfully implemented, ethically used, and pedagogically aligned with individual student needs. Librarians interpret context, provide personalized support, and advocate for adaptive technologies that are sensitive to cultural and emotional dimensions of learning. The partnership between librarians and AI helps physically challenged students build confidence, take control of their learning, and feel included; these are key components of holistic education and a well-rounded approach that honors the

dignity of every learner while fostering a just and inclusive intellectual community (Bodaghi, Zainab & Zainab, 2013; Chauhan, 2024).

Supporting the Whole Learner through Human–AI Synergy

Holistic education requires understanding each learner's strengths, needs, and aspirations. Human–AI systems can help by personalizing learning pathways while maintaining contextual and ethical awareness. AI-driven analytics can provide educators with insights into student engagement, learning patterns, and well-being — data that informs holistic support (Popenici & Kerr, 2017). However, these insights are most valuable when interpreted through human discernment, cultural knowledge, and emotional intelligence. Librarians and teachers, for example, can collaborate with AI to identify students who may benefit from specific readings, mentorship opportunities, or reflective activities. This synergy aligns with holistic education's emphasis on inclusive and responsive environments, supporting students not just cognitively, but socially and emotionally (Noddings, 2005).

Enhancing Reflective and Ethical Learning

One of the central goals of holistic education is to foster self-awareness, ethical reasoning, and purpose. AI, when thoughtfully designed, can assist in this process by enabling students to track their learning journeys, receive personalized prompts for reflection, and engage in dialogue with conversational agents trained on philosophical, ethical, or spiritual frameworks. For example, AI tutors or chatbots can prompt students to reflect on their learning goals, identify values they associate with their studies, or explore dilemmas in literature and history (Holmes et al., 2021).

Librarian-AI Partnership for Multiple Literacies

AI can support the development of multiple literacies, digital, media, emotional, and ethical, when used under human guidance.

1. **Personalized Learning Interfaces:** AI-powered platforms can adapt resources to a learner's needs, supporting inquiry-based learning while librarians monitor for cognitive depth and misinformation (Holmes et al., 2019).

2. **Sentiment and Emotion Recognition:** When ethically deployed, AI can help identify affective states (e.g., frustration, curiosity) and guide users to resources that encourage resilience, self-regulation, or inspiration (Zawacki-Richter et al., 2019).

3. **Cross-disciplinary and Ethical Reasoning:** AI can map connections between topics (e.g., climate justice and Indigenous worldviews) and suggest reflective, values-based literature. Librarians then frame these materials through ethical inquiry and discussion.

Libraries as Laboratories for Human–AI Learning Synergy

Future-ready libraries are becoming testbeds for ethical and inclusive AI in education. These spaces support:

- Collaborative filtering and semantic search tools that suggest meaningful connections across disciplines (Lim & Tan, 2018).

- AI-assisted bibliographic systems that surface underrepresented authors, epistemologies, and narratives.

- Ethical deliberation labs, where students engage with AI ethics, digital well-being, and algorithmic accountability.

These initiatives align closely with holistic education's emphasis on critical awareness, inclusion, and moral development.

AI - Enhanced Library Services

AI plays a crucial role in libraries, fostering collaboration in holistic education. AI-powered tools help librarians to connect students with

others doing similar research, fostering real-world conversations. These tools help librarians, faculty and even students to schedule meetings, translate content, and summarize long documents, removing common barriers to collaboration. When students, librarians, and intelligent systems work together, learning becomes deeper, broader, and more human-centered (Iwu-James, Haliso & Ifijeh, 2020).

Librarians use AI to analyze student usage of library resources and spaces, planning better services like workshops and interdisciplinary events. Modern library systems are utilizing AI to enhance information discovery and knowledge acquisition. These systems include intelligent recommendation systems that analyze user behavior to suggest relevant resources, personalized learning pathways that curate resource sequences based on individual learning styles, and natural language processing that enables more intuitive search interfaces. Librarians play a crucial role in guiding these systems, ensuring they align with educational goals (Chen et al., 2020 Zamani et al., 2022).

AI is also transforming library makers paces into hubs for holistic creativity, with AI-assisted design tools, machine learning workshops, and creative art installations. Successful implementations of AI systems include Ask Jamie at the Singapore Public Library, Bookster at Helsinki Central Library, and the Toronto Public Library's AI Literacy Program. (Van der Veer Martens & Goodrum, 2020 ; Brewster, 2019; Godwin-Jones, 2021)

AI tools are also being used to support the emotional and social side of learning. For example, libraries are using bibliotherapy and chatbots to help people who may need extra support. These tools can understand feelings by analyzing the words people use, making it easier to identify those who might be struggling. Virtual reading

companions can also help encourage students who don't usually enjoy reading. While these tools are helpful, they are meant to work alongside the caring, personal support that librarians provide (Naikar, & Paul, 2025; Palmquist, Sigurdardottir, & Myhre, 2025).

Librarian AI Partnership at GOUNI Libraries

Rooted in the university's guiding philosophy, "Where is the evidence?" GOUNI Libraries are bringing together, cutting-edge technologies and compassionate human expertise to create a knowledge environment that is innovative, inclusive, and ethically grounded. By promoting AI literacy, safeguarding academic integrity, enhancing research capabilities, and maintaining a commitment to personal development, the GOUNI Library affirms the university's mission to develop learners who are not only intellectually competent but also morally conscious and socially responsible. GOUNI Libraries are gradually embedding AI-driven solutions into their services and workflows, including:

AI Literacy for Users

The library organizes hands-on workshops that teach students and staff how to critically engage with generative AI tools. These sessions explore both the opportunities and limitations of technologies such as ChatGPT and other large language models, equipping learners with the skills to use AI responsibly, creatively, and ethically. This aligns with GOUNI's broader commitment to cultivating digital citizenship grounded in discernment and integrity.

AI-Powered Plagiarism Detection Tools: using **AI-powered plagiarism detection tools**, such as Turnitin, which the library administers in partnership with academic departments. Through training and guidance, librarians help students understand how to maintain academic integrity, avoid unintentional plagiarism, and

properly cite sources, thus reinforcing a culture of honesty and scholarly rigor. These practices reflect holistic education's concern with shaping both character and intellect.

Smart Search and Discovery Systems: The GOUNI Library offers smart, AI-enhanced tools that empower students to access knowledge more intuitively. Its digital catalogue and subscribed databases include semantic search and recommendation algorithms, allowing users to refine academic queries and explore related scholarly materials with greater efficiency. These tools not only expand access to information but also cultivate curiosity and independent learning, central tenets of a learner-centered academic culture.

AI-Assisted Research Coaching: Librarians are experimenting with tools such as Connected Papers and Zotero's AI plug-ins to help students visualize citation networks, generate structured outlines, and manage references. In combination with human coaching, these technologies reduce barriers to research engagement and foster student confidence, agency, and scholarly identity.

Future Plans for AI Integration in GOUNI Library Services

GOUNI Library is actively planning to scale up AI integration in ways that align with its values of equity, human dignity, and educational excellence. Some of the strategic directions include:

- Virtual Reference and Chatbots: Plans are underway to develop an AI-powered virtual library assistant that can respond to frequently asked questions, guide users through search processes, and recommend resources based on user profiles and academic needs.

- AI for Knowledge Curation: The library aims to adopt AI-based tools to help curate thematic resource lists, build

dynamic reading guides, and support lecturers in constructing digital course packs aligned with the university's outcomes.

- Support for Research Analytics and Data Visualization: By adopting tools like Dimensions, Scite, or AI-based bibliometric platforms, GOUNI libraries plans to offer deeper insights into research impact, citation networks, and scholarly trends, especially helpful for postgraduate students and faculty.

Ethical Considerations of AI-Librarian Partnership

While the promise of AI–librarian collaboration in education is transformative, it also brings complex ethical responsibilities, especially for faith-based and values-driven institutions like Godfrey Okoye University (GOUNI). As AI becomes more integrated into library systems, research support, and student services, institutions must act not just as adopters of innovation but as guardians of ethical practices and human dignity in the digital age. GOUNI's dedication to holistic education, grounded in the unity of knowledge and moral development, requires it to see AI not just as a technical upgrade but as a moral and educational choice. Key risks, such as algorithmic bias, data surveillance, dehumanizing metrics, and epistemic reductionism, threaten justice, equity, and learner autonomy if they go unchecked. In this context, the role of the university library becomes even more vital. Librarians, as mediators of trust and guardians of intellectual freedom, must actively shape how AI is designed, implemented, and assessed. Their role isn't to passively deploy AI tools but to protect the humanity of learners. Following this ethical duty, institutions like GOUNI must ensure that:

- Transparency is non-negotiable: Students and faculty must understand how AI systems operate, what data is collected, and how decisions are made. This demystification is key to democratic participation and critical agency in digital learning environments.

. Inclusivity is structurally embedded: AI tools must reflect cultural, linguistic, and epistemological diversity, resisting the homogenizing tendencies of Western-centric or commercial algorithms. This is especially vital in African contexts, where local knowledge systems, languages, and values must be preserved and amplified.

· Holism is a guiding principle: Educational technologies must serve the entire human person, supporting not only cognitive performance but also spiritual, ethical, emotional, and social development. AI must not reduce learners to data points but support their journey toward wisdom, purpose, and moral discernment.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Far beyond their traditional functions as repositories of information, libraries today are dynamic, inclusive, and adaptive ecosystems that support the full spectrum of human development. As holistic education gains momentum worldwide, libraries must be recognized not merely as service providers but as co-educators and active partners in shaping learner-centered environments. They serve as sanctuaries for curiosity, laboratories for creativity, forums for dialogue, and bridges between disciplines and communities. Through the intentional design of spaces, programs, collections, and services, libraries contribute to the formation of well-rounded individuals and socially conscious citizens. Looking to the future, one of the most profound shifts in the educational landscape will be the integration of AI into teaching, learning, and knowledge systems. This evolution presents libraries with both opportunities and responsibilities. By embracing AI not as a replacement for human expertise but as a partner in advancing knowledge, libraries can deepen their role in holistic education. In this emerging paradigm, the most powerful libraries will be those that

harness AI–human collaboration to elevate learning, democratize knowledge, and preserve the values of intellectual freedom, diversity, and shared inquiry.

The future of holistic education will depend on the ability to integrate technological innovation with human-centered pedagogy, and libraries stand uniquely poised to lead this integration. Guided by Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke's enduring philosophy of the unity of knowledge and his insistence on evidence-based inquiry, encapsulated in his powerful question, "Where is the evidence?" GOUNI's libraries are strategically positioned to foster a library culture rooted in critical inquiry, interdisciplinary engagement, and data-informed learning, making them an ideal environment for the thoughtful integration of AI. The university's investment in infrastructural development, digital resource enhancement, and AI literacy and innovation, championed by Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke, demonstrates a sustained commitment to empowering students as active co-creators of knowledge ecosystems that reflect and advance African values, identities, and aspirations. Under the visionary leadership of Rev. Fr. Prof. Christian Anieke and guided by a philosophy of wholeness, institutions such as Godfrey Okoye University exemplify a model of education that nurtures both intellectual development and the formation of character. Through the strategic integration of librarian–AI partnerships, GOUNI is demonstrating how higher education can be redefined, not merely to become more efficient or technologically advanced, but to become more humane, reflective, and purpose-driven. This reimagining of higher education is grounded in values that uphold the dignity of the individual and are deeply attuned to the collective vision, cultural richness, and future promise of the African continent.

Recommendations

1. **Invest in Library Infrastructure for Holistic Learning:** Educational institutions and policymakers should prioritize

funding and policy support for library spaces, staff, and services that advance holistic educational outcomes, especially those that support mental health, creativity, cultural engagement, and lifelong learning.

2. Foster AI–Human Collaboration in Library Services: Libraries should actively explore AI tools that enhance access, personalization, and discovery, while retaining human oversight and ethical guidance. Training library professionals in AI literacy will be essential to this balanced integration.

3. Strengthen Librarian–Educator Partnerships: Libraries must deepen their collaboration with faculty and teachers to co-design curricula and learning experiences that integrate inquiry, interdisciplinary thinking, and student well-being.

4. Promote Inclusion and Equity in Library Access: A holistic education must be inclusive. Libraries should continue expanding accessible formats, multilingual resources, and culturally responsive programming to serve diverse populations equitably.

5. Advance Research and Advocacy on Libraries and Holistic Education: Further research is needed to assess and advocate for the library's role in holistic learning outcomes. Librarians, scholars, and practitioners should contribute to a growing body of evidence and best practices in this area.

By embracing their evolving identity as centers of human-AI collaboration, creativity, and care, libraries will remain vital to the flourishing of individuals and societies. The holistic vision of education, rooted in connection, curiosity, and compassion, finds its natural home in the library.

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